



Book of Saints

By
FATHER LOVASIK, S.V.D.

Part 4



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Book of Saints

"Super-Heroes of God"

By REV. LAWRENCE G. LOVASIK, S.V.D.

Divine Word Missionary

PART 4

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Saint Sebastian

January 20

SEBASTIAN was the son of wealthy parents. He became the captain of the soldiers who guarded the Roman Emperor.

Sebastian helped the Christians who were in prison by visiting them and bringing them clothing and food. Once he healed a soldier's wife by making the Sign of the Cross over her. Both she and her husband asked to be baptized. He also converted a governor at Rome and many others.

Sebastian was accused of being a Christian and was to be put to death. He was tied, and soldiers shot arrows at him. That night a Christian woman, thinking he was dead, had some men bring the martyr to her home to prepare his body for burial. But Sebastian was still alive. She cared for him until he was well again.

Sebastian went back to see the Emperor and begged him to be kind to the Christians. He was arrested. This time the sentence of death was carried out. Sebastian was beaten to death with clubs and buried in the catacombs. Devotion to St. Sebastian spread rapidly, and he is mentioned in several books of the martyrs as early as 350.

Saint John of God

March 8

JOHN was born in Portugal in 1495. He was a shepherd-boy until he was twenty-two years of age. For eighteen years he was a soldier in many parts of Europe and led a bad life. But he loved the poor and the suffering.

John was forty years old when he left the army to make up for his sins. He went back to Spain and rented a house in which he gathered all the sick, the poor, and the homeless of the town of Granada. He often washed them and dressed their sores and begged food for them. He brought many sinners back to God.

Kind people began to help him in his work. He started the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God. They took care of the poor and sick. He would say: "Work without stopping; do all the good works you can while you still have time."

After saving a man from drowning, John became very ill. The nurses found him kneeling before a crucifix, his face resting on the feet of Jesus. He was dead. People who have heart disease pray to him.





Saint Angela Merici

January 27

ANGELA was born in Italy in the year 1470. At fifteen she became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. In a vision God revealed to her that she would help a group of women to give themselves to the service of God.

When Angela was twenty-two, she gathered together twelve of her friends at Brescia, and began the first teaching Order of women to be founded in the Church, the Ursuline Order. Angela chose St. Ursula as patron.

These women lived a holy life in their own families. They met together for study and prayer, and carried out the duties given to them. They wanted to bring Christ into family life. They taught religion especially to poor children whose parents could not or would not teach them.

The work spread and many new members joined the religious community. Angela was chosen their superior, and continued to fill that office for the last five years of her life. She died in the year 1540 and is honored as patroness for teachers of young people.

Saints Cyril and Methodius

February 14

THE two brothers, Cyril and Methodius, belonged to a family of senators in Thessalonica, but their mother was a Slav. Cyril went to Constantinople, where he was ordained priest. He taught in a university and defended the Gospel of Christ. The older brother, Methodius, after being governor of one of the Slav colonies, became the abbot of a monastery in Greece.

In 862 Ratislav, the Prince of Moravia, asked the Emperor, Michael III, to send him Christian missionaries to teach his people in their own language. The two brothers were sent to the court of Ratislav at Velehrad. They brought with them the relics of Pope St. Clement. Pope Adrian II consecrated them bishops.

Cyril died in Rome. Methodius went as a missionary to Moravia, Bohemia, Poland, and the neighboring countries. He started the Slav alphabet and translated the Holy Scriptures into the Slavonic language. He died in Moravia, April 6, 885. The two brothers are honored as the apostles of the Slavs.



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Saint Louise De Marillac

March 15

LOUISE was born on August 15, 1591. Her husband died thirteen years after their marriage, leaving Louise with a son.

St. Vincent de Paul was her confessor. He gathered groups of men and women to help the poor and the sick in each parish. With the help of Louise he began the Order of Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul to help poor and sick people. They worked in the streets and hospitals.

Louise was not well, yet she worked hard to help the poor and sick. She was very kind and humble. She said to her Sisters: "Be diligent in serving the poor. Love the poor, honor them, my children, as you would honor Christ Himself."

Louise died on March 15, 1660. Her community is one of the largest of the Orders of Sisters in the Catholic Church.

Saint John Nepomucene

May 16

IN his early childhood, John Nepomucene was cured of a disease through the prayers of his good parents. In thanksgiving, they consecrated him to the service of God.

John became a priest and was sent to a parish in the city of Prague. He was a great preacher, and thousands of those who listened to him changed their way of life.

King Wenceslaus IV invited him to the court and he became the Queen's confessor. One day the King asked him to tell what the Queen had said in confession. When Father John refused, he was thrown into prison.

A second time he was asked to reveal the Queen's confession. "If you do not tell me," said the King, "you shall die. But if you obey my command, riches and honors will be yours." Again Father John refused. He was tortured. The king had him thrown into the river Moldau at night. But the people discovered his body and buried it with honors.

St. John is known as the "Martyr of the Confessional."



Saint Rita

May 22

AT an early age Rita begged her parents to allow her to enter a convent. Instead they arranged a marriage for her.

Rita became a good wife and mother, but her husband mistreated her. He taught their children his own evil ways. One day her husband was stabbed by an enemy, but before he died he was sorry for his sins because Rita prayed for him. Shortly afterward her two sons died, and Rita was alone.

Rita spent her time in prayer, penance, and good works. She entered the convent of the Augustinian nuns.

Sister Rita had a great devotion to the Passion of Christ. "Please let me suffer like You, divine Savior," she said one day, and suddenly one of the thorns from the crucifix struck her on the forehead. It left a deep wound which did not heal and which caused her much suffering for the rest of her life.

People pray to St. Rita to help them in their family problems because she was a good example of a wife and mother.



Saint Joachim

July 26

JOACHIM, husband of St. Anne and father of the Blessed Virgin Mary, belonged to the tribe of Judah and the House of David. He and his wife came from Galilee. They lived in Nazareth and there the Blessed Mother lived.

Joachim was very sad because he and his wife did not have children. But God answered their prayers when the Virgin Mary was born. This was Joachim's greatest honor. He is the father of Mary, the Mother of God, and the grandfather of Jesus.

Joachim and Anne offered their little daughter to God in the Temple. As a young girl she spent some time in the Temple working along with other girls. But she learned to understand the Holy Scriptures from her holy parents.

Mary loved her mother and father. In this she is a beautiful example for children.

St. Joachim is honored as a patron of fathers.





Saint Boniface

June 5

BONIFACE was born in England in 680. He was educated in a Benedictine monastery and later became a monk.

He went to Rome to obtain the Pope's blessing on his mission to the German people. He destroyed the temples of idols and built churches. Once he cut down a huge oak which was dedicated to the god Jupiter, and then used the tree in building a church dedicated to St. Peter.

The Pope called him to Rome and ordained him a bishop. He returned to Germany to spread the Catholic religion in Germany.

Boniface set out to convert a pagan tribe in Holland. While he was waiting to confirm some newly-baptized Christians, a troop of pagans killed him and fifty-two Christians who were with him on June 5, 755.

St. Boniface is the patron saint of Germany. His life bears out the Christian rule: to follow Christ is to follow the way of the Cross.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

August 1

ALPHONSUS was born near Naples in Italy, in 1696, of a noble family. At nineteen he began to practice law and became one of the leading lawyers in Naples. He never went to the law courts without having first attended Mass. He made up his mind to become a priest.

Alphonsus started a community of priests in honor of the Most Holy Redeemer. They are called Redemptorists.

Alphonsus preached missions in the parishes and large crowds came to hear him. He had a great love for the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary. He wrote several books.

The Pope commanded Alphonsus to become a bishop. During the thirteen years that he was bishop, his health was never good. At 71 he suffered with very painful rheumatism which left him a cripple for the rest of his life. He made a vow never to waste any of his time, and kept it for his ninety-one years. Though his head was so badly bent that his chin pressed against his chest, he continued to preach missions and write books to the end.



Saint John Vianney

August 4

JOHN was born in France in 1786. As a boy he worked in his father's fields. After work he taught other children their prayers and catechism.

John was slow to learn, but a parish priest helped him to enter the seminary. After years of hard study, he became a priest.

Father Vianney was sent to the little parish of Ars. Since many people did not come to church, he visited them in their homes. He finally convinced the people to come to Mass. He did penance for his people and prayed for hours before the Blessed Sacrament. He lived like the poorest of the poor.

Thousands came to hear him speak and to confess their sins to him. He spent many hours a day in the confessional.

Father Vianney spent forty years as the parish priest of Ars and died at the age of seventy-three. He is the patron saint of parish priests.



Saint Dominic

August 8

DOMINIC was born in Spain of a wealthy family. After he became a priest the bishop took him on a visit to southern France where many people were leaving the Church to follow a false teaching. Dominic remained in France and devoted his life to preaching and to leading people back to the Faith. The dog carrying a torch means the fire of his zeal for souls.

Later Dominic went to Rome and told the Pope that he wanted to start a religious order whose duties would be preaching and teaching. The new order was called the Order of Preachers, or the Dominicans.

Legend has it that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Dominic with a beautiful wreath of roses. She asked him to say the rosary and teach the people to say it every day. In this way many people were brought back to the Church.

Before his death in 1221, Dominic also started an order of nuns to care for young girls.



Saint Helen

August 18

HELEN was a British princess. She became a Christian late in life. Her son was Constantine, the first Christian Emperor. It was the faith and piety of his mother that made him become a Christian.

Helen used her wealth for charity and in building churches. When the Emperor planned to build a church on Mount Calvary, Helen made a journey to Jerusalem, hoping to find the Holy Cross upon which Jesus died.

Three crosses were found on Mount Calvary. They were brought before a woman who had an incurable disease. When the third cross touched her, she was cured. With great joy the holy Empress began to build a glorious church on Mount Calvary in which she placed the precious relic of the true Cross. She sent pieces of it to Rome and Constantinople.

In the year 312 Constantine obtained a great victory through the power of the Cross. Shortly after, Helen returned to Rome where she died in the year 328.





Saint Barbara

December 4

BARBARA was brought up a pagan. She was a very beautiful young woman, and many princes came to ask her father for her hand in marriage. But she refused to marry. Her father built a tower in which he guarded his daughter. She gave herself to prayer and study, and later was baptized secretly.

When her father heard of this, he drew his sword to kill his daughter, but God saved her. Later, her father brought her before a judge, who said to her: "Choose either to offer to the gods or to be put to death by cruel torments." Barbara answered: "I offer myself to my God, Jesus Christ, Who created heaven and earth and all things."

After Barbara was beaten, our Lord came to comfort her in a vision. Her father came for her and took her to a mountain, where he himself beheaded her while she was praying to God to have mercy on his soul.

Barbara was martyred in the year 235. She is invoked against lightning and fire.



Saint Nicholas

December 6

NICHOLAS was the fourth-century bishop of Myra, a city in Asia Minor. He was very generous to the poor.

Once Nicholas heard that a man who had become very poor intended to abandon his three daughters to a life of sin. He went out by night, threw a bag of gold into the window of the sleeping father, and hurried away. Later the father fell at his feet and said: "Nicholas, you are my helper. You have delivered my soul and my daughters' from hell."

The Emperor Justinian built a church in his honor at Constantinople about the year 340. The Russian Church honors him more than any other saint. He is the patron of Russia.

St. Nicholas is honored as the special patron of children. The word Santa Claus comes from his name.

He died at Myra in the year 342. He has always been venerated in the Latin and Greek Churches. His relics are in Bari, Italy.



The Saints Pray for Us in Heaven

THE Church honors the saints who are already with the Lord in heaven because they inspire us by the good example of their lives, and because we ask them to pray to God for us.

We honor the saints when we try to be like them and when we pray to them. They pray for us in heaven.

Dear Parents:

Jesus is the champion of family life. He attributed to children a dignity that was unheard of until His coming. He stressed the worth of their immortal souls for He identified Himself with them as members of His Mystical Body.

It is the moral obligation of parents, therefore, to give their children a good example. Be most conscientious about living a good life, and set a pattern of truly Christian living for your children. The process of bringing a boy and girl to Christ means that you must help them to grow into Christ-like men and women who can take their place in life and stand on their own. This can be done by admonition, but especially by good example during the years of childhood and adolescence.

A very important means of helping your children is good Catholic literature. The reading of the lives of the Saints will be very effective. Try to acquaint your children early in life with the examples left us by the Saints who were holy because they were Christlike.

Father Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.

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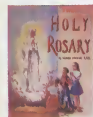
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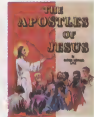
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